

sort in attendance also. Over the actions and omissions to act of these nurses no one has at present any control whatsoever, except, of course, the doctor in attendance at the particular case, and this is not of very much value, for it does not prevent a nurse who may have been guilty of gross negligence from being employed elsewhere. Moreover, there is no definite standard of training required. Anyone may legally "nurse" a case during and after confinement, so long as a medical man is in attendance also, and there is nothing, so far as I am aware, to prevent such a "nurse" going straight from one case of puerperal fever to attend another woman in her confinement under another doctor.

What is wanted here, to my mind, is some form of registration of nurses, so that the patient's relatives and the medical man may know whom they are employing. At present the condition of things is a little anomalous. A "midwife" is compelled by the State to be careful, conscientious, and, to a certain extent, skilled. Monthly nurses need be neither, and there can be no doubt that they are as a class responsible for a great deal of the puerperal infection that exists at the present time. Sometimes, also, infection results from the procedures adopted by the doctor, just as in all other surgical operations, but inasmuch as he does not, as a rule, have occasion to examine the patient internally after delivery, he cannot be held directly responsible for any sepsis arising later than forty-eight hours—the duration of the incubation period of puerperal sepsis—after delivery. He may, of course, be indirectly responsible if he has not given the nurse sufficient instructions as to what to do and to avoid doing.

Another point that occurs in practice is what to do with those patients who cannot afford to pay for adequate medical attendance and nursing in their own homes. They cannot go into the lying-in hospitals, for they are septic, and usually there is no place for them other than the workhouse infirmary, but this is apt to involve a stigma, and many patients say, quite wrongly, of course, that they would rather die at home. Of late years, however, there has been a tendency to admit them to isolation hospitals, and this is probably the best course to adopt. It is almost always possible to get, as Sister of a puerperal ward, a nurse with previous surgical and obstetric experience.

After all, however, the main factor in the diminution of puerperal infection is the dissemination of the knowledge of its causes and treatment.

## Progress of State Registration.

Sir Henry Burdett's appeal to nurses, through his anti-registration journal, asking them to sign a coupon whether or no they were in favour of registration, did not receive the immediate and overpowering opposition to registration he anticipated, and it has now been found necessary to send urgent pamphlets and papers to the heads of hospitals and nursing institutions, and to offer prizes to induce these ladies to whip up their staffs to sign. Imagine professional women being influenced by prizes of two guineas and one guinea! Nothing could prove the estimate in which their character and condition is held by the anti-registration protagonists than that these mean little sums should be considered an equivalent for their support. A prize of one guinea is also offered to the nurse working outside an institution who sends in the greatest number of votes. Presumably no professional qualification is necessary, nor can there be any verification of these voters. We advise trained self-respecting nurses to have nothing whatever to do with this anti-registration dodge. Let them only sign a *definite resolution, giving reasons for or against registration* that is intelligible and likely to have weight with responsible legislators.

Dr. J. A. Coutts, of the Central Hospital Council for London, attempts to reply to the various letters which have appeared in the *British Medical Journal*, in reply to his former communication to that journal, but he only adds further inaccurate statements and personal attacks, the usual methods of the irascible anti-registration persons with whom he is so closely associated.

Before Dr. Coutts was persuaded to attack those women who are in favour of protecting the public from the ministrations of criminals and incompetents posing as nurses, we could wish he had consulted the very experienced Matron of the hospital to which he is attached—the East London Hospital for Children, Shadwell, as she is a member of both the Matrons' Council and the Society for the State Registration of Nurses—societies to which he denies the right to express an opinion upon their own affairs. No woman in the nursing world has earned for herself a higher reputation than Miss Row as a trainer of nurses in the speciality of children's nursing, or for devotion to the sick poor in the East of London during the past thirteen years, and he might well have been guided by her expert opinion on nursing questions.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)